

#### Don't Relax Media Ownership Rules

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I live in a community where the print and broadcast media has long been dominated by one corporation. Everyday I witness the stranglehold that this media consolidation has put on the expression of diverse viewpoints and perspectives on local and national matters. If the proposed new rules are enacted, I look for my local media "giant" to eventually sell out to one of the national media corporations with disastrous results for local news, programming and responsiveness.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented have become more limited. The merger frenzy experienced by the radio industry following the relaxing of rules in the Telecommunications Act of 1996 is an object lesson in what to expect upon the adoption of the proposed media ownership rules. Three corporations own half of the nation's radio stations. In my hometown, two stations owned by the same company operate with identical programming and inately tout the sad fact that "Now there are two Willies."

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge the FCC to delay the vote scheduled for June 2, 2003, by at least 30 days and hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public. Your primary charge is to serve the public interest in the area of media and communications. It is the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. I think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

It is a disgrace that a decision of such import to the future of our democracy is being made in the FCC's private chambers with little meaningful public input. The Commission's decision is being based upon an incomplete record comprised of dubious data that was supplied by the companies that stand to profit from your decision and which has not been made available to the public.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues

more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you,

Kent Price